773
524

points them out successively with his finger, saying: "cross the pond" (ko tike sumangolo), "cross the river" (ba tike sumangolo), "Soumangolo's descent is over" (sumangolo yigi bana). The partner removes the pebble immediately adjacent to the branch pointed to and asks: "Is this it?" (nin wa?). The player must answer: "Yes! Soumangolo." The game is again taken up in the same way at the starting point. When the onlooker places his finger on the now empty space, he asks: "Is this it?". The player must answer: "No! Soumangolo." The second pebble is removed and, to the same question, the player must then answer: "Yes! Soumangolo." Then follows the same chant, the same mimicry to get at the third pebble, which is also removed. The game is started over again in the same way, at the same starting point, and the second branch of the cross is reached. This continues until the four groups of pebbles placed in the angles are eliminated. The player who has answered without making a mistake is the winner; supposedly he has victoriously crossed "the twelve future waters."

The immediate effect of this game is to place the winner in a favorable position: his earnings increase; his enterprises succeed. But this is not all: it represents a cosmogonic operation of a high order. In the old days, sumangolo was played to bring about rain in times of drought; every person playing it today contributes to the actual functioning of the universe as well as to the realization of future times awaited by men. In certain villages the ancestor Soumangolo is celebrated yearly by a hearty feast at which millet beer is drunk and all day long the villagers play the game bearing his name.

[789]

[796]

The sumangolo is part of a series of figures, sometimes geometrical, which serve as the base for cosmogonic games of semi-ritual character such as the one described above.

826
828
[827]

taboo by cutting its buds (see p. 43). The altars of the fields and of agricultural societies, to, watch over the "head of the millet."

/66/ and purified in order to maintain his health and prosperity. It is the seat of consciousness and will, and receives a share of the scarifications made at birth, which will exercise influence on the person.

826 Hair contains an important part of the individual's ni. It is therefore dangerous to mix it with the hair of another, for that would create a vital and indissoluble bond between the two parties. To burn it is equivalent to making an attempt on one's own life. It is buried or placed in a deep hole in the wall of the house for protection (1).

[832
789]

1. Many charms and magic spells are based on hair. In order to be loved by a woman, a man must mix some of her hair with his and place it under his head at night with a prayer. In order to keep his job, an employee does the same with his hair and that of his employer; he then sacrifices a victim over the ensemble so that the employer cannot fire him without risking his own life.

Hair and the pilose system play a part in the myth and were used to count the age of primitive men until the advent of death on earth. All the ancestors represented in the sanctuaries are bearded and hairy. Their appearance shows that, having become mortal, they lived at a time when rejuvenation no longer existed.

826
827 The pupil is the fundamental part of the eye. Its name, nyemani, "little person of the eye" (2), expresses its function. The pupil re-

2. Man's pupil, according to information that is still obscure, was made with that of the serpent and was also called nye mani sa, "serpent of the little person of the eye."

flects and absorbs the person it sees. The image is a kind of double,

551 passing before his door and thus empty him of his nyama. The man
576 grows thin and poor. The griot may bring about his death with evil
778 words, their nyama attacking the heart, the chest, then the entire
564 body of the victim.

The griot's power over the person he flatters becomes more involved and varies according to what he is reciting. If he recites the burudyu several times, if he speaks at length of the ancestors, their nyama enters his mouth and is added to his own, thus reinforcing the power of the word. Thus, when the griot recites a barama without receiving payment, his nyama attacks the person spoken to. If this offense is repeated and if the burudyu is recited, the man is forced to pay if he does not wish to be attacked by the much more formidable nyama of the ancestors.

In these various situations, the tere of the person flattered intervenes: if it is good, it fights to defend the person, but if it is weak or wicked, it joins the ancestral forces and the person is doubly threatened.

The recitation is always made by the griot before a witness so that his action will be more binding and make the miser lose face. On the other hand, a man who pays the griot generously is looked after by the latter who sings of his generosity on all occasions and announces the sum he has received; often he does not hesitate to exaggerate the total amount received if he can hope to profit by doing so (1).

[789] 1. If the griot knows that the wealthy man he is addressing is miserly, he rubs his teeth with roots which he knows has the power to make his words even more effective.

[554] Sometimes a man reaches a secret agreement with the griot in order to gain prestige. He publicly gives him a considerable sum, part of which the griot returns the following day as agreed upon. The gift is so generous that none can surpass it.

[585 561] This practice is particularly apparent at the time of marriage. The men of the same age grade as the groom outdo each other in their gifts to the griot. The one who has given most passes for the most generous. Sometimes the griot invents a new barama on the spot even though he does not know the device.

782 While keeping his eyes and his left hand closed, he walked without
826 touching the ground with his toes in order to respect "the soul of that which he carried (1). At the edge of the river, the joints were broken,

1. To touch the ground with one's toes amounted to putting the soul of the victim's body in contact with the earth's impurity (see p. 102).

the marrow extracted and poured into the water. After placing their toes on the body, to "give a part of their soul to Faro," the men deposited it gently in the river, into which it sank while they loudly proclaimed the reason for their action. When they returned to their master, they brought him the spirit's gratitude and a little water from the river, which was poured over the royal seat (2).

2. This offering was called nasi, "well-being."

/96/ The upper part of the victim's body was the king's and used for the needs of the state. The tõdyõ first blew into the mouth of the tortured victim so that the "air, in coming out, would take all his words to Faro." Then they buried his head under the king's throne and danced to the rhythm of drums.

[726 In case of war, the blood which had spilled during the sacrifice
789] was collected by the tõdyõ and dried in the sun; then the residue was carried away and before the assault was thrown in the direction of the town to be attacked. The king who advanced with his army found, according to the formula, "his sacrifice before him" (saraka bla fĩe).

782 2. In case the king was short of funds, the killing took place
826 towards the west and was performed by sticking a bamboo stick into
789 the throat of the victim so that blood would run over the cowrie shells which the king had earned himself "with his own sweat." Thus consecrated, the cowries "attracted gold, silver, and copper to the royal treasury."

The head was placed under the throne. The chest and lungs were dried, reduced to powder, and preserved in a bag which the king kept. When he received his tax-payers, he smeared his face and mouth with this powder, thus forcing the visitor to give. He rubbed his body with it before going to war, causing the warriors to say:

782 826 789 "To see the king is to see gold" (1).

1. Fama yele ye sanu yele ye.

He gave some of it to his wives and children who put it in their drinks in order "to inherit his place and his goods." This powder was offered at each sacrifice to Faro in order to fertilize the kingdom.

782 826 266 3. When a family was plagued by numerous deaths, they asked the king to authorize the sacrifice of an albino whom he furnished himself. The victim's tongue was dried, pounded to powder, seasoned with pepper, and eaten by the father of the family to permit him to "reclaim the words and the nyama of the deceased." The nose was swallowed by the mother so that she might "reclaim the breath of the dead children." The father then ate the broiled eyes to "preserve lost sights." The dried ears were hung above the sill of the entrance "so that death, upon hearing the funeral wails, might not return." The skull was retained as a token and buried in the courtyard; a wooden stick marked the burial place. The rest of the body was thrown into the Niger, "for an ordinary man does not have the right to keep that which is reserved for the king."

782 826 622 If the king permitted it, chiefs of the important villages /97/ also placed the body of an albino under their seats "in order that their authority be solid and enduring" (2).

2. Sometimes the sum total of the taxes raised in a village were given the parents of an albino in exchange for the child. Those who could not obtain a victim used an animal bone as a substitute and performed the ritual as though it were an albino. Regarding the chief's seat, see p. 178.

782 826 In certain serious cases, the albino was sacrificed on the altar of Komo. This sacrifice was accomplished in silence for "a prayer unknown to the person sacrificing is in the blood of the albino" who is powerful enough to act without words.

291 activity is not involved. Nevertheless, a woman puts on an indigo
773 loincloth the day she resumes sexual relations with her husband after
822 the end of her menses; she retains it until pregnancy. When she is sure
531 of her condition, she puts the loincloth in the sun to purify it and will place the newborn child in it to remind him later that he owes his life to his parents. A dead person who has broken a taboo is buried
[764 in an indigo shroud, the only reminder of light being a white cotton
784] thread which is placed on the corpse as an expression of apology and forgiveness. Since indigo is taboo in most of Faro's sacred places, no one wears it during sacrifices or religious ceremonies.

White and indigo complement each other. To twist a white and
[789] an indigo thread together to make a string used for holding an amulet is to "roll together happiness and unhappiness, as in life."

The dye wolo is the color of yellow copper. It is in this color that the newly circumcised are dressed after the operation and until they are healed. Red, mbegu, is the color of copper and of blood. Hunters who wear a tunic of mbegu are "covered with a garment of blood." The band kayo (Pl. III, a, 1), in which are found these two colors, indigo and white, reproduces the rainbow: the white intervals are symbols of the word and of purity. /110/ A person making a sacrifice sews a piece of this band on his clothing to indicate that he is circumcised, that he is a hunter, and that he is truthful in his actions and words. A band is hung at the gate of the northern entry to the village in order to protect its inhabitants from dangers coming from outside. A man wears it when he has been ill or has suffered serious financial or family difficulties. On the altars, on the doorways, the colors are represented by millet mash, blood, and kola nut extract.
[821 As the rainbow keeps away the rain and dries up water, the kayo
784] strip may not be worn near the river or during sexual intercourse, for it is Faro's taboo.

The band sirakele (literally, a road) (Pl. III, a, 2) represents Faro's descent from the seventh part of the sky down to the seventh part of the earth, the indigo stripe being the dyi fi, "black water," the spirit's earth seat. When put on the loincloth of a married woman, it expresses her rectitude and the good behavior she intends to maintain towards her husband. When worn by a traveler, it prevents him from losing his way.

291 The buguni (1) (Pl. III, a, 3) is "the sun ray Faro gave to Pemba
773
821
531

1. The word designates the band's place of origin, Bougouni.

326 778 243 The lower compartment contains millet from a field called kongobwona foro, reserved for the needs of the cult of the forge. This land is placed under the guardianship of the patriarch belonging to the Gwonna family, and its upkeep is assured by the community. The seeds are given by each blacksmith to the old man who sows them himself. The work of cultivation and threshing is done communally. The millet is stored in the old man's granary and each blacksmith receives a share. This share is not eaten, but is put aside. From time to time the artisan takes a few seeds which he places as an offering on his altar, and which remain for a time in the compartment reserved for them; then they are considered to have been eaten by the axe and are removed and replaced by others. Part of the millet is kept as seed for the following year.

326 778 789 Each compartment is open and the blacksmith may insert his fingers; if his earnings are insufficient, he rubs his body and tongue with the hand which he has just dipped into the pocket containing money; the price, set by the spoken word, will not be questioned by the client. If he goes to work in his field, he places his hand into the millet each morning to draw upon the strength it contains and to improve the results of his agricultural work. If he burns himself while working at the forge, he dips his fingers into the third compartment and cools himself in Faro's water. It is this same water which a young artisan must drink at the beginning of his apprenticeship.

326 778 776 The triangular iron, farabye, which constitutes the axe proper is placed under the power of three spirits belonging to the group of air spirits: A gayru who revealed iron to men; Tengu who taught them Faro's supremacy; and Gulle. The first two are the masters of the bellows and direct the work as a whole; the third does their bidding and teaches men the technology of ironwork (1). When the owner

1. The spirit would have refused to teach the blacksmiths the working of copper and gold, as these two metals belonged to Faro who reserved for himself the right to use them. Since iron was black he had abandoned its use to the spirits of the air.

of the altar dies, the /121/ axe is removed and placed in the village sanctuary where the ancestral tools are kept. But the remaining objects are inherited by the son. 428

553
852

3. If the village has no Komo, the name may be given above the paternal Tuafebla.

two jars of millet beer, a ram which will be sacrificed, and money to the griot who will sing during the ceremony.

[189
826] A lock of the newborn's hair is shaved off and kept in a case (sebe) which, before being carried away, will be hidden in an oil container for the following reasons: to protect the person from magical practices; to prevent a donkey from eating it, an occurrence which would cause the child's death; to permit him to seek for himself health and a long life in the image of his hair which will have remained in good condition.

The rest of the hair is carried by a female relative to the river, into which it is thrown in honor of Faro. Next a band of white cotton called faro fini (literally, Faro's clothing), on which someone has "spat" kola nut juice, is bound around the forehead of the newly baptized baby to indicate his subjugation to the spirit.

The senior elder then examines with attention the hairline and the meeting point of the eyebrows on the forehead before announcing in a loud voice the signs determining the child's character (tere). Then he grasps the child and swings it /179/ seven times from east to west, eight times from south to north above the altar while giving it the forename (toko) which he has inherited from a dead person along with the spiritual principles (1). The griot recite the father's genealogy

1. According to another source of information, the eldest son receives the forename of his paternal grandfather, the second son that of his father, and the following sons those of the mother's fathers and grandfathers.

(burudyu); the senanku comes to joke with the newborn and gently pulls his nose and ears.

852
304 On the same day the blacksmith draws on the child's face the wolo ti, consisting of seven vertical frontal scars and two horizontal scars under each eye. The first scars represent the complete man (ni and dya); the second, representing the number two, symbol of

304 766 The importance of the wanzo and the necessity of its leaving the person are such that in the case where a child dies uncircumcised, the operation is performed on his corpse. If this is not possible, the circumciser cuts his left ear and says:

"I cut the ear instead of circumcision" (1).

1. Mba klo tikę bolokoli nona bi la ye.

It is buried with the corpse or kept in the paternal home, but the wanzo leaves the child. If the operation was not performed, it would contribute to the formation of a very dangerous nyama, which would be more aggressive even than that of an old man and from which the society would have to suffer.

/188/ Excision

304 323 789 The operation is performed with a little iron knife by a potter, the wife of a blacksmith. The blade, which is male, represents the sun; the handle, which is female, represents both the clitoris and the moon. The woman protects herself from the wanzo of the newly excised girls by wearing bracelets and charms and by smearing a black salve on her eyes.

304 323 The operation is performed in full daylight at the edge of the village and in the presence of the assembled kinsmen. In certain localities it takes place near the potters' hearth. Each little girl is seated in turn on an inverted pot and is operated upon while prayers are recited. Just as the boy whose foreskin is badly formed is wounded on the thigh, so the girl in the same situation is considered excised if she submits to a test which replaces excision. In the latter case, the woman operator places a hedgehog skin between the girl's thighs and presses these together energetically so as to make the blood run (2).

2. In case the girl is the daughter of a blacksmith, the blood running over the pottery indicates her future role as potter (see p. 169.

The young girls must neither cry nor moan; on the contrary, they sing to exalt the departure of the wanzo.

364 778 796 the chief throws dust three times to the four cardinal points. The masker then stands in the wind in such a way as to receive the smoke; the chief and the members crouch in line behind him with their mouths open to inhale better. When the wind changes its direction they all move to continue this fumigation, wusuli, which constitutes a purification as well as an increment of forces. At the moment the fire is almost out, the most courageous of the participants stamps on it in order to assimilate better the nyama which it exudes. The ashes, [804] gathered by the chief, are distributed, the unit of measurement being the gourd mure. An important share goes to the nyama boli, another is given as an offering to Faro, and a third is distributed among the members.

Several days later, the group goes to the river bank to the sound of drums beating out the murumuruw foli (literally, rhythm of the refuse); they throw the ashes reserved for Faro into the water and, continuing to dance, return to the village.

364 778 252 Those ashes given to the members are used to prepare the potass which is mixed into the millet cake, the daily food of the Bambara, and which will make the members of the family share in the powers contained in the nyamanto.

364 778 The eating of this mixture closes the cycle of the transfer of forces, which were temporarily communicated to the refuse by the individuals, then recovered by Faro, and finally redistributed to the social body.

III. Rain Rites

● 789 241 At the time the first work is done in the fields, a drawing is made with millet mash upon the tree of the Kworè in the shape of a lozenge inscribed within a rectangle, which represents "the great fire which issued /204/ from the cardinal angles" at the time of their creation. While this is being done, the following words are spoken: "The four elbows (the lozenge) are the fire of the angles; here is the anniversary of the Kworè." The clearing of the field or the first plowing always symbolizes the very first clearing obtained through fire.

789 796 794 During the month of May, the members of the Kworè society make sacrifices upon their altars before the first rumbling of thunder in order to purify the first sky where clouds are formed from the impure passage of Mousso Koroni. The chief gathers the members about the tree and recites the following prayer:

789 796 794 "I have come to you, Kworè, if (the cloud) is black in the east, let it come; black in the west, let it come; black in the south, let it come; black in the north, let it come; black above, let it come, and then let it give a great water" (1). He next pours on the ground the

1. Ne nani na kwore nani na; a ma fi korona a ka na; a ma fi klebi a ka na; a ma fi woro dugu a ka na; a ma fi keñeka a ka na; a ma fi sãfe a ka na; otumana a ka ke dyi ba ye.

millet mash and the blood of fowls brought by each member. The initiation of the new members takes place during this ceremony.

After the drinking of millet beer which follows the ceremonies, it is customary to tell the story of Mousso Koroni chased by Pemba and pursued by Faro.

If, in spite of this the rain does not come soon enough, the members gather at the foot of the tree and bring with them an iron axhead which is placed in fresh water. The water is next poured out at the foot of the tree; it symbolizes the cold which the spirits of the Kworè are subjected to in the second sky during their struggles to make the rain come through.

In certain villages the sacrifices to the Kworè and to Faro are offered at the same time. At Massala and Soroba, the members go to the shore of the Niger, carrying the kworè boli with them. The bit of water which it contains is poured into the river and replaced while a prayer is addressed to Faro. The throat of a victim is then cut and some copper is thrown into the river. The altar is shaken above the water to imitate the noise of thunder and rain. Upon their return to the village, the members light a fire at the foot of the Kworè tree and place thunder stones in its embers.

"Heating the stones shakes up their soul"; when they are hot, they are plunged into cold water "to warm and to agitate the soul of water." The smoke from the fire, as well as the heat absorbed by the stones and the water, force the rain to fall.

/205/ Victims are sacrificed and the members return to the village around which they circle six times, beginning at the west. Then they return the nimara boli to the sanctuary and the elders who represent the spirit dance about on one foot to the sound of drums

as an imitation of Faro who has only one lower limb. The altar, which is placed in the sanctuary by the chief who enters it walking backwards, receives as an offering a little water from the Niger in which thunder stones have been soaking since the night before to be "refreshed." The same libation is made on the kworè boli. After returning to the home of the chief of the Komo, libations of millet mash are poured upon the walls of his house; then, in the name of Faro, the nimara boli, and the Kworè, the throat of a white ram is cut; the flesh of the animal will be thrown into the river, at the conclusion of the ceremonies.

(c) At the end of the winter season the "anniversary of the Kworè" is celebrated; its purpose is to commemorate the action of the spirits during the preceding season in order to obtain rain water.

On the fixed day, members of the society, wearing loincloth and carrying in their left hand a whip made of macerated and twisted grass, and in their other hand a torch of burning straw, gather near the tree around which they circle and sing to "gather up the Kworè." The cracking of whip lashes which they give each other represents thunder claps; the beating of the drum which accompanies their songs imitates its rumbling. The burns which they inflict upon themselves recall those which the spirits endure in the celestial combats. They next direct their steps toward the public square where the villagers have gathered and where the spirit they have supposedly invoked by their mimicry is leading them. When all have gathered, the kworeduga, who represent the spirits mounted on their winged horses ready to fly into combat, appear dressed in their traditional costumes and riding their wooden horses.

They advance while dancing and singing verses which are then taken up by a chorus of the members. The latter having formed a circle, the chief places himself in the center, whipping himself, burning himself, and pretending to swallow the fire of his torch. When he is weary he stops and the members take turns to imitate him. Powder made from ground pepper is blown into the dancers' eyes to recall the burning heat of the fiery heavens.

The kworeduga, who have by then put down their wooden horses, set their foot on the earth ready for the fight, after having seized some green tree branches. They put out the fire which has caught onto the clothing of the dancers and participants. This gesture recalls the action of the wind which, in space, put out the hot fire that

776 precision of which the native substratum seems unaware. In any event, there is no Bambara word for "God" except the one [177] brought by the Moslems -- "Allah," pronounced as Ngala. This lack of a Bambara word may be explained by their custom of avoiding pronouncing the name of powerful people for fear of incurring their wrath.

[177] There is no superior spirit of evil: Seïtane [Satan] is likewise a Moslem introduction. The Bambara does not visualize a hierarchy of spirits.

776 Finally, it must be concluded, from the existence of many magic practices, that there is a belief in a kind of uni-
778 versal energy, which is diffuse by nature and which, by appropriate
789 means, one can capture and use as one likes. Certain genii or gods are merely emanations of this invisible, imponderable and active force, which no obstacle can stop and which can instantly overcome space and strike at a distance. This is the basis of all native magic.

[129] 2. Morality and Customs

776 When, as among Catholics and Moslems, the after-life is believed to be influenced by one's conduct in this life, there
577 is a rule which determines what is and what is not proper if one wishes to earn the greatest possible rewards in the life to come. The saints and pious men have shown the way to this end.

For the Bambara, however, the next life is merely a continuation of this one and he does not think that he can, by conduct, improve his chances in the next life since it offers no rewards or punishments for his day-by-day actions. Neither his manes nor his genii give him an example of conduct to guide him. Therefore, without thought of the future, he goes along solely concerned with the present; he seeks what will give him pleasure, tries to avoid what seems harmful, and all this in a groping way, as one walks in the dark.

577 Sometimes, it is true, he is led to behave with a degree
626 of decency and to avoid certain too shocking lapses, which would expose him to reproach, alienate his friends and create for him

787 alone and it applies to the future as well as to the present and the past.

787 Mantic differs from magic in that the latter allows man
787 to use certain methods so as to subordinate natural and extra-
787 natural forces, while the former is contemplative knowledge,
791 which does not impinge on the prerogatives of the divine but merely puts divine thoughts into communication with human understanding.

Further, theoretically at least, the diviner is not linked to any particular cult and is not to be confused with the priest, since he transmits the divine will outside of sacrifice, which is the priest's function. However, it also sometimes happens that the diviner is the oracle of a particular divinity and that the same person combines the functions of both diviner and priest as in certain cults described in what follows.

787 There are innumerable methods of divination. Before pointing out the principal traits of some of them, let us first note that there are cases when the divinity enters into direct relationship with a human being and speaks to him in human language. The chronicle of Ségou gives an example, in the legend concerning Kolé, head of Biton's guards, who was approached by a genie in the forest and told of the conditions on which he would be assured of his power. Ngolo Diara cheated Kolé of the benefits of the revelation by carrying out the sacrifice required by the genie before Kolé got around to it.

Dreams in which events take place just as they do in reality constitute one method of direct revelation. Frequently, however, there is a variation between dream and reality [134] which makes the meaning of the dream uncertain and therefore makes an interpretation necessary. Among the Bambara there are people who act as diviners by interpreting their own dreams. On being consulted about a problem, they claim to receive in a dream during sleep the correct information for throwing light on the difficulties involved.

A favorite method is that in which the diviner abandons himself to his god: he is possessed by the god and becomes his oracle. In the trance he is, so to speak, the instrument through

787 The kolon' kala is used in the same way to discover stolen or lost objects. In that case it is wrapped in a loincloth belonging to the victim of the theft, along with something equally personal.

What are we to conclude from these divinatory practices? Are oracles based entirely on charlatanism and trickery? This would be a failure to recognize the credulity of the practitioners, most often the first to believe in their own practices.

771 Religion and Magic. There is nothing more involved, incoherent and contradictory than the cult customs of the Bambara. In order to give a clear picture of the essential traits, we shall follow an outline based on the distinction which becomes apparent on close analysis.

It can be stated that these people always honor the manes, the nyana dugu-da-siri and some other nyana, without presuming to impose human will upon them. Indeed, it may even be said that the Bambara make an effort to behave in a manner presumed to be pleasing to them.

However, the majority of the nyana are spirits suborned by man and serving his will.

Finally, there are appropriate rites which make it possible for humans to exploit a portion of the universal energy and to use it as they wish.

771 Let us say that the cult of the manes and of the independ-
789 ent nyana are what constitutes the religion of the Bambara, while the subjection of the spirits and the exploitation of universal energy properly constitute magic, which in its most feared form is called sorcery.

This distinction is obviously arbitrary. There is no custom that is not in some measure impregnated with magic, and this is so true that it is uncertain whether one should consider [139] religion to be a sort of purified magic and magic a perversion of religion or even its parasite.

Without seeking to decide this question, we shall simply point out that there is often a clear line of demarcation between religion and magic. All one needs in order to see the difference is to compare the cult of the manes with the practices of sorcery

771 used to capture the spirits of the dead. The native clearly shows
789 how much he respects the cult of the manes and, on the contrary, how much he is disturbed and terrified by the practices of the suba (1). However, many practices cannot be so clearly

1. See Chapter 7 concerning the suba.

differentiated because they have elements of both religion and magic. Such practices are held to be allowable and even desirable, illicit and hateful, depending on the point of view and the places, circumstances and persons involved.

If we keep in mind the foregoing remarks and limit ourselves to the most characteristic traits, it is possible to establish a parallel between religion and magic among the Blacks.

Both acknowledge the existence of an invisible world which is everywhere in contact with everything subject to our senses. But while religion in principle assumes man's dependence vis-à-vis this invisible world, magic operates on the theory that anything that exists comes within the power of "the one who knows" (don na ba).

Since the Master of the Universe appears not to take much interest in what he has created, his creatures do not honor him but, rather, have recourse to the Spirits and Powers (nyana) who are willing to take a hand in human affairs. Religion organizes, for the benefit of these benevolent nyana, a cult designed to make sure of their good offices. Magic, on the other hand, forces them to execute its will.

[775] Religion and magic both believe firmly in the dual nature of man: a finite body and a soul which survives this body. When death comes, this soul goes off to join the family of manes, who are bodiless souls like it. From that vantage point the soul continues to watch over the affairs of its relatives still in the world of men. Religion regards the manes as guardian spirits and strives to make sure the continuity of their [140] will and wishes. Magic treats (1) these incorporeal souls like the

1. Especially by means which give magic the character of sorcery.

771 nyana and seeks to use them for utilitarian ends.
789 By virtue of the beliefs on which it is based, religion engenders a certain degree of morality. Magic uses its knowledge to exploit the Universe for material profit.

In both camps there are initiates. Whereas the most
[791] famous adepts in magic live in a kind of isolation, where they jealously keep the secret of their practices and where they exist apart from human societies which at once honor and fear them,
[794] religion, on the other hand, displays its cults, if not exactly publicly, at least in the circle of the faithful. The latter, since they are usually completely familiar with the ceremonies of the cult and with the high-priests, are the masters and most venerated members of society.

Religion receives its most reliable support from the natural family and from the communities derived from that family. Legal magic has copied these organizations in the form of brotherhoods, which Europeans call "secret societies," a kind of spiritual family in which the members are only gradually admitted to all secrets.

Whereas the religion of the manes forms the strongest link that holds together the members of a community, and represents the framework of the society, magic on the other hand cares little for this union and in fact helps to disrupt it by the hatred it engenders. Thanks to magic, the individual feels competent to challenge the community and never fails to do so.

Let us look more closely into the traits characteristic of religion and those characteristicof magic.

By studying all that concerns especially the patriarchal and family communities and the associations growing out of these communities we shall be able to see the place occupied by the religion of the manes and of the spirits, as well as the effect of magic upon the basic manifestations of the life of these communities.

789 Since magic, in a sense, envelops every act of the native, it seems to us essential, at the start, to look into its characteristics so as to facilitate the understanding of all that is to follow, which is impreganted by magic in so many ways.

789 In connection with the brotherhoods, we shall see how magic has been organized [141] in the very heart of native society and we shall observe the stability and the repercussions of its work.

Magic

778 789 [774] Universal energy. There exist individuals who are subject to certain phenomena, as yet imperfectly known or explained, in which the human being is divided into two so that on occasion his immaterial self lives a life independent of his body in a sphere inaccessible to corporeal sense. Such a man then enters a milieu from which he brings back visions and sensations that he can only describe vaguely and frighteningly in his habitual language after he has returned to a normal waking state.

Among the Bambara, occurrences of this kind have been observed and good use has been made of them, especially in the brotherhoods. They constitute a confirmation of belief in the invisible world, as do dreams. And the Bambara sees many other indications -- which escape us -- of the existence of this extra-natural world which envelops everything and which he conceives as a force sometimes active and sometimes inert, diffused or personified. It is this energy which is, as it were, set in motion by a curse, by the extreme expression of envy called "evil eye," by luck or by misfortune. A chief's authority derives the essence of its strength from this activity. And it is the reason for honoring the dead.

This invisible force, instantly transmissible to the greatest distances, is present in all things; it exists everywhere, in everything and in everyone. It possesses or acquires a greater or lesser power in certain objects and in certain people for a stated period of time or for a temporary period. It can be beneficent or maleficent, or both in turn. The ordinary man who touches such objects or such persons will usually be struck dead or, at the least, gravely affected, as he would be if he touched a high-voltage electric current. For the initiate who knows the secret of this force and who knows how to use it, this

778 is a virtue which exalts his own faculties to such an extent that
789 it gives him a supernatural power that is terrifying to the uninitiated.

This property of transmission by contact accounts for the veneration which surrounds the possessions of eminent persons and those among the dead who [142] exercised power during their lifetime. Objects especially venerated are those that were in almost constant personal use: clothing, weapons, toilet articles.

The same property of transmission no doubt also accounts for the nature attributed to matter, which has been called continuity. Everything emanating from an object retains the occult energy within it, and, further, anything that "the man who knows" (don-na-ba) does to these detached parts affects the whole from which they came (1). That is why an undigested portion of

[787]

1. Divination by means of the kolon' kala, previously described, is allied to this belief. The bits and pieces of the deceased act as the dead man himself would do in guiding the bearers of the kolon' kala.

food, if suitably treated by the magician, can spoil the digested portion of the same food. The chronicle tells of how this theory of the continuity of matter was used against Bani. By means of hair and a sandal, stolen from him, the magician paralyzed Bani's clairvoyance and put him at Da's mercy.

791 Magicians. It is the learning of the magician which, so to speak, brings order out of the chaos of the world. In the broadest sense of the word, his art, magic, is a kind of utilization of the occult. It is true that there is no Bambara, from a chief down to the least of the slaves, who does not act as his own magician, but there are specialists and some of them very famous. Besides, not everyone can be a real magician. Natural talents give some individuals the power to penetrate the invisible world and to feel at home there. Some are initiated by genii who have taken a fancy to them, as shown in the chronicle of Biton; others learn the craft from a relative or a well-known magician, either at no cost or at great expense.

791 Every magician (soma) (2) has his own methods: one

2. A sorcerer is a suba (See Chapter 7).

may be intuitive and work from an inner light; another may operate only by deductive divination. All who lay claim to real power submit to rules which are often strange and rigorous and which dominate the most trifling activities of their lives. And all are fanatically determined to keep the secrets which, in their own eyes no less than in the eyes of the uninitiated, are the foundation of their mysterious powers.

[143] Very properly, the range of their investigations and their action is without limits, since everything is impregnated by the energy which is everywhere and in everything and which perhaps is everything, material form being merely one of its manifestations.

789 It is worthy of note that artisans are subject to the same
463 dislike as that for ill-famed magicians. It is not too hazardous
791 to deduce that manual labor once consisted of magic rites which were held to be indispensable in conquering matter. This is still evident in the case of blacksmiths and hunters.

791 Everywhere in the Sudan, blacksmiths are considered
326 and, indeed, behave like magicians. The extraction of iron is surrounded by essentially magic rites in which only blacksmiths may participate. After ritual preparation, they work naked while the job lasts and return to normal life only for a certain time after the work has been completed; even then they have to observe special rules. Their work is commonly thought to be tinged with magic. Their tools are impregnated by this invisible energy and, on certain days, the hut in which they are kept becomes a sort of temple, with the blacksmith as priest. The chronicle (1) attributes to Fa Siné Dyara, a blacksmith who

1. See p. 112.

could understand the language of the birds, a role especially helpful to the Massa-si.

791
609
821 "Can one imagine being given such orders? All that was left for them to do was to ask for the moon and the stars."

Niany is typical of many Sudanese blacksmiths, at least
791 of those who actually practice their trade, and it is no wonder
326 that the natives keep people of that caste at a safe distance and show them consideration, fear and a degree of scorn. For the Blacks, people as well as things connected with magic are inclined to take many forms.

791 Hunters also are magicians. One need only see a hunter
224 start off to recognize that this is true. His person and his equipment are covered with amulets that constitute a covering as well as an arsenal of magic weapons.

825 The Blacks have a different idea of animals from ours;
778 they too are powers with which one has to reckon. In proof of this, there is no animal, however tiny, which cannot be, at some time or other, very dangerous and therefore worthy of respect. So animals are addressed as "master" or "lord." The animals always to be feared are never called anything else:
[552] wara-ba means lion; sa-ma, elephant; ma-li, hippopotamus; bam-ma, [148] crocodile. Etymologically, all these names indicate "master" or "lord."

These terms are not meaningless; they attest a belief that supernatural power is incorporated in animal species. The attentions paid to animals have no other purpose than that of
825 conciliating the good-will of this power or, at least, of avoiding
789 its wrath. The common practice of using animal debris (skin,
[237] horns, tail, hair, offal, etc.) to make magic charms is an application of the principle of continuity of matter, of the individual and of the virtues peculiar to them. A rabbit's foot is tied to a
[843] pregnant woman's side in order to hasten the child's arrival; a small bag of lion skin will make the child brave and strong.

It seems likely that the domestication of animals is a
231 happy result of magic practices. These tamed creatures are held
552 to be "weak ones" and are treated as such. However, some of
825 their names show a trace of the esteem in which they were once held and which is still shown on occasion: fa-li meaning "donkey" derives from fa meaning "powerful," just as nya-ri meaning "cat" derives from nya and has the same meaning, along with ba meaning "goat."

invoked is requested or required to act.

There are times when on the contrary, the native is inclined to hold the energy in check, in order to avoid the harm that would result from this sort of action. For this purpose he abstains from doing certain things; this is the origin of many taboos (tne).

The acquisition of magic power in order to gain strength or to be able to act so as to avoid being affected by magic or, finally, to be able to get rid of magic power when one is permeated by it to a dangerous point -- all these involve appropriate actions or rites whose forms and conditions only magicians or others gifted with intuition can determine.

The chronicle shows that chiefs make use of magic to try to strengthen the supernatural power which is the basis of their position. Dina Wara secretly ate a special dish made of a goat's head; Biton took special baths, whose virtues Ngolo appropriated by trickery just as Biton had done with respect to Dina Wara, his brother-in-law. All sorts of comparable practices accounted for the increase of Ngolo's "luck," that modal quality of supernatural power which confers a degree of magic potency on the possessor. This so-called "luck" has, as it were, a kind of radiation, which confers special good fortune on whatever it touches. That is why the marabouts advised Biton to live in close proximity to Ngolo so as to take advantage of the favorable atmosphere.

This energy is attached to everything and, especially, to objects that come into direct contact with anything impregnated with it. What one wears on oneself thus becomes a sort of accumulator, and that is why the objects left upon a powerful person's death are so carefully preserved and constitute the most valuable part of his legacy. The chronicle tells us with what veneration the cap and weapons belonging to Biton were regarded.

Magic force is therefore acquired by means of appropriate practices indicated by magicians; one shares its benefits by living near those entrusted with it by applying to oneself what comes from such privileged persons. Here again is a result of the continuity of matter. Whatever the case, anything

778 emanating from the person or object impregnated with magic
789 force acts as if it were a part of that person or object. Often
[788] the magician or [154] ritual officiant spits on the person or object involved in the rites. This is a means of transferring one person's fluid to another.

Conversely, it is vital to know how to avoid contact
751 with, or even emanations from, a maleficent magic force.
787 That is the reason for the great number of mysterious magic
754 practices and the secret of the innumerable amulets that form so many shields, to be placed presumably where they will best protect against any blow. Therefore it is the magician's prerogative to make amulets and to prescribe the conduct necessary to preserve their efficacy.

It should be noted that protection set up against a given person is good only for him and is useless against a successor, for instance. The chronicle tells us that Bani, chief of Samba-Nyana, was successful in using certain artifices to prevent Ma-n-son from conquering him. But, kept in ignorance of Ma-n-son's death and having taken no precautions against Da, Ma-n-son's son and successor, Bani was conquered by Da, against whom his artifices availed nothing.

If one is caught in spite of precautions, what is to be done? Everyone is afflicted in one way or another in any event. A Bambara is always inclined to believe in some sort of supernatural intervention. He has on hand some sort of remedy, but more often he resorts to a "seer" for guidance or, if the case requires, to a magician's skill.

Native medicine is a mass of magic formulas and of remedies strikingly reminiscent of the pharmacopeia of the Middle Ages (see, in the foregoing, father Niany's operations).

[571] The individual does not live as an isolated unit but
789 rather as an integral part of a community. In the society in
783 which he lives, however restricted it may be, he progressively occupies various situations. On both physical and moral levels, he undergoes changes and, depending on circumstances, whether fortunate or unfortunate happenings, changes take place within him. In short, his magic potential varies. These variations are always believed to concern the entire milieu, upon which they may (in the case of illness or death) have disastrous effects.

789 The individual is therefore required to [155] undergo proper
783 treatment to return him to his normal, harmless state.

789 From this point of view, social life seems to give rise
788 to a series of rites involving the disintegration and reintegra-
182 tion or the aggregation of the individual in relation to the group in which he lives. Birth, circumcision, marriage, illness, death and the performance of certain trades are all modes of existence, whose beginning and end usually involve three stages: separation from the common milieu, accomplishment of the act, and reintegration into the former milieu or aggregation in a new milieu. Between the first and the second state as well as between the third and the fourth there exists usually a kind of negative interval which we call marginal. This system, which comes to light upon an analysis of multiple facts, is actually subject to modifications or alterations which can change its physiognomy. Nevertheless, the basis of these ritual sequences is so well established that by comparing external manifestations with the theoretical system it is possible to understand them better and to restore to some of them, which have become badly mutilated, their real meaning, which the native is usually, if not always, unable to explain or to define precisely.

A detailed study of institutions will give an opportunity for concrete analysis of these ritual sequences, which a kind of age-old empiricism has transformed into laws of a sort. They have come to represent that part of custom which has acquired a kind of permanence by virtue of public acceptance.

It is apparent everywhere among the Blacks that events of a general character (birth, coming-of-age, marriage, illness and death) are surrounded by ritual practices that vary outwardly from place to place but may all fit our theoretical system of three stages with marginal periods. All denote a common basis of magic and all derive from a long-tried empiricism which has given them a peculiar and relatively stable physiognomy in terms of the milieu with which the rites are connected.

571 What we have just said about individuals must also ap-
182 ply to collective groups: the latter deal with each other or

764 close the opening of the niche and carefully fill any cracks with earth moistened and kneaded on the spot.

During all this the women sing in a low voice and clap their hands, accompanied by muffled drums.

When all is done, the sons of the deceased come out of the excavation, and the principal gravedigger comes forward with his spade upside down on his shoulder and holding a gourd full of water in his hand. Silence falls, and the women and drummers are still. He pours some water at the head of the grave, saying: "See this water. Do not be angry, pardon [169] us, give us rain in the winter and an abundant harvest. May the wind blow from the east or from the west, from the north or from the south, as is best for us. Give us long life, many descendants, wives, and wealth." And the throng replies: "So be it (o de ka ke)."

With the back side of their spades the gravediggers then fill in the excavation. The women resume their singing in rhythm with the clapping of hands, and accompanied by subdued drums, they say: "Our fa is dead, but he will return! Young men, fill in the grave well so that no sorcerer (suba), no hyena, no wild beast can carry away the corpse."

764 778 789 When the grave is filled in, the person holding the strip of material still attached to the shroud pulls it so that it breaks. This bit of cloth is a precious relic for use in various magical performances. The magical bands called tafo are made from it and are tied around the waist to protect one from back ailments and spectral apparitions (1).

1. These are a few of the innumerable examples of magic practices which in the most diverse forms accompany all important activities.

The coarse mat which had served as a bed for the deceased is put upon the grave, along with a pair of his old sandals and his water jug. The finer mat is usually given to a friend or to a family, and it is then burned outside the village (1) [Ed., see footnote above].

764 Burials are never willingly held on either Wednesday or
789 Saturday (1) [Ed., see footnote above].

Finally, a small white chicken (2) to ward off bad luck

> 2. If the corpse is a woman, a fertilized egg is used.

is sometimes put into the niche just before it is closed off (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above].

Upon returning from the burial, someone clubs the dead man's dog (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above], unless he left express orders to the contrary. Some Bambara even go so far
[554] as to buy a dog with this posthumous honor in mind. This seems to be another magic practice to exorcise the ghost of the deceased (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above].

When they have returned to the house, the brothers-in-law of the deceased eat the national dish, millet mush (to). When they leave for their homes, each is given a rooster or a hen in the name of the deceased, which they must eat en route before they reach home. If the fowl [170] were not eaten until they reached their villages, it would arouse the dead man's vengeance; his ghost (nyama) would haunt these impious persons. This too seems to be another magic practice to counteract the evil effects of death.

764 (c) The funeral celebration. As soon as the death has been announced, it is the duty of every relative, neighbor,
431 friend, or anyone under any sort of obligation to the deceased to bring an offering in proportion to his rank or degree of obligation for the purpose of honoring the dead (1).

> 1. We noted earlier the sanctions applied at the funerals of Biton and Ngolo.

In certain cases, the total of these offerings is very large. The chronicle of Ségou tells us that when Ngolo died the cowries contributed filled seven huts, representing several thousand francs. Besides, people give whatever they wish or can afford: a horse, a cow, a sheep, fowl, cowries, gold, strips of native cotton, fabrics, grain, etc.

881 freshly shaved (4), their bodies rubbed with vegetable butter
[302]

4. Just as their heads were shaved at birth.

(si tlu). [242] arrive in single file. . Greeted by the onlookers, they take their places in the front row. Shouts, noisy conversation, and songs are intermingled and make a racket which is interrupted by the arrival of the "girls of the soli" (soli-ma-moso-u). With their hair in a tangle and dressed in short skirts (1)

1. Blue for Moslems and yellowish-brown (basa) for the purely pagan Bambara.

reaching from the navel to the knee, they enter one behind the other, walk around the assemblage, and finally take their places in a group near their mothers and friends.

The assembled men drink around the fires.

881 All the drums are there, and as soon as the girls appear,
533 the drummers rush to their instruments. There are big drums
534 resting on three legs (denu-ba), others which hang from the shoulder, and still others carried under the arm. Young women shake bits of iron (kinge) as one shakes castanets, and there are other iron instruments provided with rings. Old women pound on gourds turned upside down in pots filled with water.

The noise is deafening, and it is dominated by songs in honor of the ancestors shouted by the whole assemblage as loudly as possible. Then the whole crowd, where the tipsy are in the majority and where everyone is at the highest possible pitch of excitement, starts a frenzied dance accompanied by songs usually improvised.

881 While all this is going on, the adepts of the major
● 789 brotherhood (2) are outside the village, noisily driving out the

2. The Komo around Ségou; the Nama in the Kaarta area.

881 evil genii in order to preserve the "people of the soli" (soli-ma-u)
●787 from their bewitchments.

881 The soli. The soli, this make-believe birth, is marked
304 by a bloody operation, circumcision for the boys and excision for the girls. The fact that the ceremony does not get its name from this operation demonstrates that it is merely show; it is merely a rite of separation between the previous state and the new one (3). The operation takes place at dawn.

[171]

3. That is why among other peoples the operation does not exist or represented by a mere slash on the thigh (among the Koniagui).

Boys. The blacksmith who is to circumcise the boys waits outside the village under a tree. Assisted by members [243] of the sects and especially by the Komo-tigi, he performs the operation behind a loincloth hung up as a screen. The boy stands erect, and the blacksmith draws out the prepuce and cuts it off, after having determined approximately the proper place to cut. The patient is expected to show no weakness; on the contrary, he exerts himself to say a few words to show his courage.

As soon as the operation is finished, a gunshot announces the news to the elders crouched about the village fires, and a female griot proclaims it to the bystanders. The Komo-tigi takes a few nyanka leaves, burns them, and goes to place the ashes on the boy's familial kara. The boy runs off to rejoin his companions under the tree especially chosen for this reassembly. All the boys will spend their days there, on the fringe of society with which they are forbidden to mingle. They return to the village only at night, to sleep in a hut reserved for them.

881 A man reputed to know how to care for circumcised
304 boys lives with them, takes care of them, and closely supervises
292 them; this is the sema-tye. Every day abundant food is brought to him for his patients. The latter wear a dloki (blouse) and kursi (trousers) made of cotton cloth, blue or yellow-brown (basa) depending on their affiliations (1), and their headgear is usually

1. The basa color is much in demand

881
304
292

among the Bambara, while the Marka use cloth dyed indigo-blue.

a high cap with strings extending from the earlaps. They can only leave the place where they are assembled, even for the needs of nature, under the leadership of the sema-tye and shaking a stick of wood to which are attached bits of broken pottery. This rattle is called n-koso-m-bara.

881 They pass the time plaiting mats, gossiping, laughing, and pestering passers-by. On market days they are permitted 304 to block the paths leading to the village and to collect a tithe from the traders.

The officials of the sects often visit them in their retreat.

Girls. The blacksmiths' wives who are to remove part of the clitoris await the girls outside the village under the trees. Some matrons assist them. Each child in turn runs up to the operator and squeezes herself between [244] the legs of the matron who exposes the clitoris. The excised clitoris is laid [789] in a little woven basket and is carefully preserved for making talismans.

The completion of the operation is announced in the same way as for the boys, and the Komo-tigi likewise puts the ashes from nyanka leaves on the familial kara.

The girl then rejoins her companions in the hut reserved for them in each section of the settlement. There they are under the surveillance of an old woman, the sema-moso, who knows how to take care of them and who sees to it that they behave properly. They are very well fed.

881 Wrapped in skirts, they lean on canes of dried millet stalks when they walk and shake a gourd pierced with holes and [514] filled with pebbles. They go out only for the needs of nature and then all in a body. They warn the passers-by by shaking their rattles and singing improvised songs. As they near paths outside the village, they intone a refrain.

Soli da woro (1). The seclusion of the soli-ma ceases

1. Literally, "sixth day of the soli."

881 At the end of this time, the nyana-n-son-na-ba and his council having come to an agreement with the sema to end the period of seclusion, each leader performs certain magic passes, under the boys' tree and near the girls' huts, to dispel any evil. The Bambara are convinced that so long as the period of convalescence is not officially closed the circumcised boys or excised girls are as much a danger to society as society is to them; that is why they must spend this period in seclusion. Furthermore, anything used by them during their seclusion is impregnated with this evil and may spread it.

881 783

Therefore, as soon as the interdict is lifted, everything is collected to be burned at sunset (2). Near the trees outside

• [789]

2. However, personal effects (the boys' kursi, dloki, and baufla, and the girls' tafe) are not burned; along with their stains, these are impregnated with virtues which make them particularly valuable for talismans, amulets, and other magic weapons.

the village the mats, the n-koso-m-bara, the gourds, millet stalks, rags, etc., are all piled up, and the nyana-n-son-na-ba sets them afire. The boys and girls jump over the fire three times; they are then free to return to the village. They run home promptly to adorn themselves for the festival celebrating their return.

881 Once more there are lavish meals and interminable drinking bouts, followed by a general gathering in the public square. People come from all directions, among them appallingly decrepit old women who try to manage everything. [247]

[791] On this occasion, the boys, soli-ma-tye, appear for the first time in true man's attire, full trousers, cap with earlaps, and an ample new shirt. With lance in hand, they swagger about and simulate the behavior of warriors; they are now tye-kura, "new men."

881 301 The girls also are decked out to excess in women's attire. Wearing several skirts and adorned with all the jewelry relatives

Methods

Are the rites and magical practices used in the brotherhoods efficacious?

Here, as in all matters, the Blacks operate by feeling their way, imitation, or adaptation, all incomplete. Just as an ignorant man is perfectly capable of accidentally starting a clockworks whose mechanism he does not understand and so can either start or stop it, put it out of order, or break it, so a Black can sometimes, by a kind of empiricism, get results similar to those of the magnetizers, hypnotists, magicians, and alchemists of all times and places.

Without plan or method, the Sudanese magicians and sorcerers [252] have nevertheless not worked in vain. In the process of arousing the native's emotional temperament and keeping it ever aroused, they have created an atmosphere favorable to the rise and propagation of psychic phenomena. Any type of spirituality would benefit from this age-old process by which the Sudanese soul is all the better prepared to broaden its mystical tendencies toward the cult of the manes which the magicians have carefully kept within the material domain of immediate utility.

We have never heard of a single magician who, when he seeks to penetrate the invisible, has sought to understand its arrangement so as to regulate his own life with a view to attaining a privileged position in that world invisible to us. Each of them is merely trying to obtain a fragment of the universal energy in order to realize his worldly designs. Still, this continual striving toward the supernatural has often strengthened the feeling toward the manes through the spirituality that has been aroused. Thus, as magic loses its power, man's desire for the supernatural, lacking a goal, augments the cult of the manes until it goes on to something higher. Thus a new spirituality is created on the native plane, which is easily oriented toward revealed religions when they know how to receive it.

771
797 Finally, there is no doubt that a learned Moslem, who is well-dressed, who does not get drunk (1) and who behaves with

1. At least in public.

dignity (1) [see footnote above] greatly impresses the pagans; his mere example creates a favorable atmosphere for Islam.

Therefore some of the natives, trying to imitate outward appearances, find themselves drawn toward Islam, whose rites they practice without even having any desire to be converted. The mere fact of dressing in white, wearing a white cap, going about [337] in sandals, conspicuously telling one's beads, salaaming while muttering incomprehensible words or continually repeating "Allah Akoubar," and participating in important ceremonies, suffices to give an individual an elegant air without in the least interfering with pagan traditions.

The Islamism noted by Mungo Park in the Bambara army and among the Kouloubali and other dignitaries, is an example of this simple formalism. On the other hand, the Bambara, without exception, [789] are eternally on the lookout for magic formulas: talismans, amulets, remedies and procedures of all kinds. And Islam provides a whole arsenal of magic which is very popular with the Blacks.

In addition to all these attractions, Islam seems to the Bambara to have institutions which are not basically opposed to their own. It tolerates polygamy, divorce, repudiation and slavery. As practiced over a long period by the natives, who have skilfully Sudanized it, it is adapted without difficulty to all sorts of situations. The blacksmith, that master of accultism, scarcely has to change at all when he becomes a marabout; he merely acquires some new manners which enable him to preside at birth, circumcision, marriage, death or other social or family ceremonies in the name of Islam. However, this is an Islam so close to paganism that it differs only in name. Allah, under the name of Ngalla, has taken his place in the Bambara pantheon alongside the other nyana, and the only distinction is that he has his own "manner."

784 One might perhaps think that it would be very difficult not to
602 see one's tné....? In the Sudan good manners require that people
576 discipline their glances from their earliest years. A son-in-law lowers his eyes in the presence of his mother-in-law, a daughter-in-law turns her back at a three-quarters angle out of modesty in the presence of her father-in-law, and when a lover goes to win over the father of his fiancée, she runs away and hides. Any Negro, however poor his manners, will direct his look no one knows where, into space or upon his toes, every time he greets anyone and hears his news, and will chat with a person for a quarter hour without ever looking at him. No more is asked for the tné. Undoubtedly a Bambara shields himself with both hands in its presence... and he plays the young daughter-in-law; he knows well how to differentiate between seeing and looking, and he knows how to tell you at the time, however little he is accused: "Né y'a yé tigné, n'ka, nè gné tount'a la, né m'a flè. I saw it certainly, but I did not leave my eyes on it, I did not look at it."

3. The Gnâma

789 The tné are rendered sacred, above all, by the curse of the
778 ancestor. Nothing is so much feared by the Bambara. To be cursed,
626 and cursed by his father, is the greatest evil that can befall a man; his wives would run away from him, his children would blush to call him "father," his /27/ friends would abandon him, the people of the village would be terrified to speak to him; he would have to flee. And where would he go? The gnâma of his father, of his ancestor, of his fetish's tné, would cling to his steps and follow him everywhere. Only suffering would be left for him; sickness, hunger, poverty, and humiliation would be his lot and, rejected by humanity, he would die in despair.

789 The word gnâma is very difficult to translate. Does its equivalent
778 exist in our French language? Gnâma is a force, a power, or also perhaps a /kind of/ energy, a fluid possessed by every man, every animal, every living being; it never disappears and continues to exist even

789 after death. This energy, this fluid, is the envoy, messenger, or
778 emissary of hatred, vengeance, and justice, and it goes wherever it is sent by the will which is its director and master; it goes wrongly or rightly to bring misfortune, poverty, sickness, and death. The word gnâma is constantly heard from Bambara lips.

789 The song of young girls who have been excised begins with
778 these words:

Bo n' yé, gnâma, o gnâma, bo n' yé!
304 Go away from me, gnâma, oh, gnâma, go away from me!
539 Dankoun bâ la
(i.e., Gnâma who dwell) at the great corner of land formed by two paths that cross.
Gnâma fambali, bo n' yé!
Gnama who kill, go away from me! (1)

1. Translation: "Go away from me, all kinds of gnâma, who dwell at the big dankoun (a corner of land formed by two paths that fork, intersect, or cross at the exit from the village)! Gnâma who kill, go away from me!"

789 The ears of those who consult sorcerers have had their fill of
778 this word: Gnâma djougou bi é nofé. A malicious gnâma is chasing you, so avoid this and that, kill a goat, a chicken, or a dog, place a gift of cowrie shells, a kola nut, etc... in a certain place. Nonté i fa gnâma na ouli i la, otherwise the gnâma, the avenging force possessed by your father, will rise up against you.

Always, the word gnâma carries this meaning of a force, a power, a fluid that causes sickness, suffering, and death. The following proverb alone expresses much of its meaning: Ni warani-n-kala ko, /28/ ka fa, gnâma si dé t'o la. If the panther (a tyrant as wicked as a panther) says, "Let us kill him," we surely have no gnâma to set against him (no force or energy that we might set against him as a counterbalance to the force of his gnâma).

789 Animals also have gnâma, and the gnâma of birds are among
778 those most feared. By preference, they attack little children, who
825 die in convulsions as a result; it is impossible to mistake the cause
153 of their illness and death, since the hands and feet of the child curl up like a bird's claws. Birds are thought to be especially wicked in winter time, undoubtedly because they nest, find plenty of food, and
[751] are big, fat, and vigorous. During that season mothers tie around the necks of nursing infants a string that has nine knots in it, which places them under the protection of their gnâma. Birds keep their gnâma even when dead, and I remember that in November or December, 1907, all the village of Songhobougou attributed a small influenza epidemic to the death of a big black bird (the djougo), which a European killed in one of their fields. "We have pains in our kidneys, we have pains in our throats, and we cough," they said dismally, "and the hunter is to blame for it all. Toubabou ko tɛ́ vva? A ye djougo do fa en ka forola, djougo gnâma do.... It is the European's fault, he killed a djougo in our fields and we are weighed down with gnâma." /29/

Chapter 2

Animism and Its Consequences

1. The Beliefs about Spirits

776 The Bambara has not deified the forces of nature. Although in some instances he shows them respect and fears them, he leaves them without priest, /sacrificial/ victim, or altar; he is not a "nature worshipper" in the strict sense of the word; his true religion is animism. His spiritualism knows no bounds and he sees genii just about everywhere. The bush is full of these spirits; they lodge in the trees or lounge astride branches; they run around the outskirts of villages; splash in ponds and wells; they pull themselves onto high rocks,

152 After all, what can one do about an evil that cannot be exorcised except to bear it? What can one do against a powerful being that cannot be disarmed? Nevertheless, in the depth of his being he feels a need to enjoy himself (and enjoyment for him consists in drinking, eating, sleeping, and procreating); therefore he feels a horror of all suffering and neglects nothing that can protect him from it. In order 751/ to live in peace, he reddens everything a little with blood and covers 789 his body with grigris or good-luck charms, with talismans that change the course of things and even of nature, and lastly amulets which will forearm him against poison, help him avoid an accident, cause the sorcery of the malicious to miscarry, send away the gnâma of the genii, of the living and the dead, and prevent the unknown forces which are found more or less everywhere in nature from taking hold of the wearer. For this protection they address themselves to the priests of the djiné and the boli, and especially to the sorcerers who have close contacts with the genii and are the mediators between man and the entire invisible world.

776 Since the Bambara conceived the visible and invisible world as 782 similar to what he believes himself to be, he has come to believe quite naturally and without any effort that the genii can be seen and conversed with their language understood and, finally, that it is possible to subjugate the forces of nature and hold them in one's power. By making offerings and sacrifices or causing them to be made through the intermediary of a priest, he can win a spirit's favor and thus lessen his fears and terrors. But if the spirit is weak, they will be ready to withdraw their attentions; it must be equal to the one feared and if possible outdo it.

778 It is force, or, to use their term, fanga, that governs each 791 person's conduct toward his neighbor; to be obeyed, a man must first cause himself to be feared, and only a powerful man will succeed and see everything yield before him. /34/

The Negroes have seen people of low birth and poor family succeed in increasing their property and become rich to the point of where they have servants and slaves and dominate a whole village, a whole tribe, or a whole people. Since they like to reason from

794 bolitigi, the latter have every interest in protecting them, for not
793 only do they pay /38/ their masters annual dues of 80 to 160 cowrie shells, which is little, but they also provide the meats and kola nuts for sacrifices and the d'lo, or beer, for the nocturnal drinking bouts and orgies, and thus are a real godsend.

3. Metamorphosis

776 The Negroes say that a djiné or a boli genie can pass from one
●789 body into another. Today it may paddle in a pond, be enclosed in a tree, or sit on a rock; tomorrow, if it wishes, it will make its dwelling in a cow's tail, in a horn, in a dirty rag. Whatever its dwelling may be, it is never confined. The Negroes compare these spirits to the wind, to a breath which enters and penetrates into a space through the smallest crack and fills it. Yet they have bodies and are equipped with organs; they drink, eat, and procreate and differ from man only in their tenuity. Since the Negroes are convinced that certain people have become able to master and command the spirits, could they not come to believe that it was possible to attain, like them, a rarefied state? In any case, they do believe in metamorphosis, and it is by entering into an animal or plant, or changing himself into an animal, a plant, etc., that the wicked person succeeds most often in avenging himself, in appeasing his hatred, and even in doing evil for the mere pleasure of doing it.

789 A good number of sorcerers have this privilege, and sorcerers
564 are not the only ones! Entire castes have the power of metamorphosis;
754 among others the Koulé, who dig out canoes and mend cracked gourds, can all change themselves into hyenas. The sons of the Siri, who are members of the sect dedicated to the boli of this name and are called souba (1) because they commit their crimes during the night, change

1. The name souba is derived from sou ("night") and ba ("great"), ma ("man"), being implied. It means "a man of the great night," "men

789
564
754

who operate in the depth of night, " but by no means refers to nocturnal sorcerers. Moreover, in the eyes of the Negroes it designates not a bugaboo, but a reality.

themselves into hyenas in order to dig up corpses and eat them, and into gingin ("owl, " "screech owl") to drink the blood of sleeping men and women. It is said that the blood of young girls has an especially exquisite taste, /39/ and when the souba are unable to enter a dwelling in material form to obtain it, they change themselves into such a rarefied breath that they go through the walls and roofs.

753
789
754

All persons whose faces are disfigured with scars resulting from boils or canker sores are considered victims of a souba, as are those whose legs are rotted by syphilis; every person infected by erysipelas goes to the members of the Siri sect, the souba.

791
789

In addition to the souba there are the gné-fla (1), men with

1, They are supposed to have the ability to make themselves invisible by means of grisgris hung on their belts. Deprived of these, they are powerless.

two eyes, with second sight, so called because they see the world of invisible beings and know the secret thoughts of men without having to undergo metamorphosis. Some of them are good and some evil; there are those who use their prerogatives to halt the blows of the souba and protect their fellows, and others who use them only to harm their neighbors. As the good as well as the evil can abuse their power, the Negroes keep them all together, and since the souba are almost always gné-fla as well, they are indiscriminately feared and hated.

789

When a person is metamorphosed into something else he keeps his intelligence and his reason, but he is dominated by an instinct, either good or evil, which destroys his will and anesthetizes him.

789 It is impossible for him to resist this force, this power which seizes him and forces him to act. His mercy or his rage is exercised on the first person at hand; he does not even spare those who are dear to him, and his children, his wives, and his friends quite often become his victims. He has one excuse: he remembers nothing -- for a very good reason -- and if he does remember, it seems to him that he dreamed.

794 789 The Siri sect, which admits women to its ranks, hides its mysteries in such profound secrecy that it is impossible to have a really accurate and precise idea of them, at least for the moment. Nor is it possible to know who is a souba without being a souba oneself; one can only guess. If someone were to denounce his fellow as really being a son of the Siri, he would be declaring himself to be a member of the sect, and the vengeance of the people would fall on both the accuser and the accused. /40/

Belief in the souba, the gne-fla, and in all those people metamorphosing themselves is most childish, and like all Europeans I have treated it as a myth, a daydream, and a bogy used by men to terrify women and children. But now, I must state that the contrary is true: this belief is generally held and is firmly entrenched in minds of the Bambara, and anyone who would try to prove the impossibility of metamorphosis to one of them would appear a fool in his eyes, for to him it is a fact (1).

1. The Siri sect, whose members are known in the Ségou circle as the souba, and among the Malinké, the people of the Worodougou, etc., etc., as the soubaga, resembles the cannibals of Uganda, the Basêzi, and the cannibals of the Ouchirombo, the Baswêzi. These cannibals are not a separate people (in a given family some may be Basêzi or Baswêzi and others not), but members of a sect similar to that of the Bambara souba and capable of the same transformations

794
789

and metamorphoses. Although I have no precise data, this coincidence leads me to think that the same is true of cannibals of the Ubangi.

782 To be convinced one need only be present at the sacrifices; no matter whether the offering is to the djiné genii, the boli genii, or to the shades of ancestors, there recurs, always, the phrase: "Deliver us from the souba and the gné-fla." One of the chief functions of the boli fetishes is just this, and there are some whose special and primary role is to make war against the Siri genii. One of these fetishes is the Nama, a powerful boli which is greatly honored, venerated, and, I should say, fashionable in the Ségou circle and among all Mande peoples. The Ngouansa, known especially in the Worodougou, is also said to specialize in this sphere. From time to time it makes its appearance in the Ségou circle, and its owner without fail does his bit of business and fills his purse. People run to him from all sides bringing hens, goats, and kola nuts, and I have seen these Ngouansa tigi, or masters of a Ngouansa, red with blood after spending the entire morning sacrificing. Before cutting their victims' throats, they stand, facing east with arms akimbo, and shout at the tops of their voices: "Souba, you are dogs, you are even less, the excrements of dogs, oubou bo."

791 825 824 Would the name of the souba and the gné-fla be heard so often from the lips of the Negroes, would families, villages, and sects /41/ spill so much blood or offer so many kola nuts, if they did not sincerely believe in them? Not only do they find an irrefutable proof of the possibility of metamorphosis in the fact that the caterpillar turns into a chrysalis which becomes a butterfly, they will also tell you that the winged termite, "that short-lived creature which on winter evenings comes in swarms around the lights, scattering wings everywhere, in the soup and on the plates," buries itself in the ground, swells like a sorghum seed, grows roots, and becomes a graceful shrub and then a beautiful tree provided it is spared by fire. I do not know the scientific name of this shrub or tree, but the Negroes call it sandéré.

754 The dounkono is administered or poured by sliding a pinch of it
674 under the nail of the middle finger of the left hand and throwing it with a skillfully concealed flick into the food or drink of the enemy. Food sauce, dégé (millet flour mixed with water), millet beer (d'lo), and di kolé (hydromel) are suitable and without doubt easily poisoned.

Throwing poison, korti sou, remains the prerogative of the sorcerers, priests, and masters of the fetishes, and one must be somebody in order to use it (2). As with the dounkono, a pinch is slid

[264
•789]

2. There are many old Bambara who, after a meal with a neighbor or friend, mutter a prayer while washing their hands and make the motion of throwing korti poison. This is a curse which they throw against the enemies of the family that has received them.

under /54/ the nail of the middle finger, and with a strong flick it is thrown onto the enemy or merely toward him or onto an object which has belonged to him, and it is ordered to be effective, to kill him if possible, or at least to reward him with a sickness which he will long remember.

The Bambara fear the korti far more than the dounkono and if an enemy seriously threatens him with it they tremble. For a person so threatened is no longer dealing with a man, a power equal to his own; he must be on guard against an all-powerful god who places his strength and power at the service of the man. The force is submissive and obedient, triumphant and vengeful; it delivers its blows blindly where it is ordered and onto any person against whom it is aroused and against whom it is hurled. That, in my opinion, is the exact translation of the expression, korti sou ma la. As a dog is set on a person (oulou sou ma la), so korti poison is thrown at him (korti sou ma la).

The Negroes say that korti has a crushing effect: when it strikes you, you feel a violent upheaval throughout your body, your limbs stiffen, and you fall backward. You may die of the attack, but

843 291 One last discreet word about the pregnant women: Their loincloths, the cloth rags with which they gird their hips, are held in place by means of a cord, a common string knotted below the navel, a very unsightly thing, or sometimes by means of a colored cloth, a red handkerchief, for example, folded in a triangle.

842 789 A male child, is more highly valued than a girl, and to obtain this blessing the Bambara consult sorcerers and diviners and sacrifice to the boli fetishes. The women have great confidence in amulets, and they wear hung at the waist many dirty bags which form an ugly roll under the tafe, or loincloth (the knotted cord, tafo, is worn around the hips). Some wear their "boy bringer" where it can be seen; it is a square leather bag three fingers wide which contains medicine: bits of bark and wood, and sometimes a goat's horn which the woman slips between her thighs (1). /168/

1. This horn is also often worn in order that the child may have a perfect body, or so as not to have a premature delivery. Nicolay says that these talismans or magic objects, which are capable of changing the course of events and even of nature, are made and sold by sorcerers. /Fernand Nicolay, Curiosités des lois et coutumes. Histoire des croyances, superstitions, moeurs, usages et coutumes (selon le plan du Décalogue) /Curiosities among Laws and Customs. A History of Beliefs, Superstitions, Manners, Usages and Customs (according to the Outline of the Decalogue), Paris: V. Retaux, 1901./

844 Birth of a child. -- In Bambara country the "demon" usually takes part in the joys and sorrows of the family. However, I have

881 Shouting -- and that is an understatement, the young people
534 throw themselves onto their instruments, which are drums of every shape and size. Some, the bass drums, are carried on the abdomen and fastened to the waist by a bark cord; others, smaller but longer, are slid between the legs or under the arms, and tambourines, hung from the neck, swing at the level of the navel as a new kind of pendant. The old women with toothless jaws join in; they scrape two iron rods together or create syncapation by furiously beating on an inverted gourd floating in a conari full of water with a piece of wood or a pumpkin stem.

881 Virgins, married women, widows, prostitutes (all mingling) slowly circle again and again around the orchestra behind the soli, shaking in their hands the bags of goatskin or boxes of white iron, and until morning every boy that is to be circumcised and every girl to be excised hears the glories and feats of his lineage. There is nothing very lofty about these songs containing thousands and thousands of wishes; although there is a feeling of passion in them, there is no love; beauty of the heart is lacking, and all is badly told. The men also from time to time leave the jug and mingle in the dance, but the night belongs to the women. And it belongs to the gods. If, tired of the bedlam, you leave the ball and go outside the village to breathe a little fresh air, you hear the piercing cries of the herald of the gods, you even see him in the darkness, running from one tree
[292] to another; with horns on his head and a coat decorated with feathers of hens, guinea fowl, egrets (1), etc., he looks like those story demons

1. This is the costume worn by Negroes when they dance the dance of the Komo fetish.

which grandmothers depict so well in the late evenings.

And this herald of the gods, with his retinue, is performing a
● [789] curious rite: he is chasing out the evil spirits and clearing a place for the favorite god of the village so as to drive away sorcery from the circumcised and the excised. /180/ In Bambara this is called kéné sâlo (1) and can be translated into French as "exorcising the place."

881 until they are completely healed; for it is not until evening, when the setting sun reddens the horizon and takes on its bloody hue that they re-enter the village. From this day on they wear a costume (all [292] yellow if they are Bambara) of trousers, a blouse, and on their heads a kind of handkerchief tied under the chin (4). They pass the time in

4. In some villages, instead of the yellow handkerchief the circumcised have a cap with two points. In Bani country the circumcised wear the blouse and handkerchief, or cap, and nothing more.

making mats, singing, striking together gourd disks strung on a stick, and especially in eating, "for they are being stuffed," and in sleeping. /181/

881 But in speaking of the boys, I forgot the little girls! They undress under the tree nearest to the sacred karite. Naked as a worm, 304 each one when her turn comes runs at top speed with her abdomen to the ground and throws herself into the arms of a woman, also of the blacksmith caste, who immediately cuts her. On a braided platter, [285 made of fine, pliable grass, the mother or her substitute receives the 415 bloody fragment which will be a grigri, a talisman or good-luck •789] charm for the house, and while the gunpowder speaks, the disabled girl, pretending not to be suffering at all from the loss of her clitoris, goes back to her place, and another replaces her.

881 The session ends with the last girl, and the crowd breaks out in a song of joy and triumph. The mother, the eldest sister, or a [482 serving woman wraps the excised girl in a big white cloth and carries her astride her back to the village to the hut which has been prepared for her (1). This carrying, so laughable in itself (they can walk, even

[621 1. Each village is divided into
346] quarters. The excised girls of each quarter have their hut in that quarter.

4: Henry--228 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

585 Departure of the bride. Exorcism of her hut by the boli of the village. Her entrance into the village. The first night. -- It is night, the hour when families crouch in a circle around the gourds of to, or millet gruel, stuff themselves with food, and noisily suck their fingers. Why is it, then, that this evening the women hurry in such numbers to the public square with gourds on their heads? At every turning of the streets there are people who are cleaning their long flintlocks, and in the b'lon, or entry huts, there is the deafening noise of drums as the skins are stretched and they are tuned. And the cries that fill the village crack your ears and jar your nerves. What is it then? A young woman, a fiancée, who is struggling in the arms of two husky fellows and shrieking -- for appearances, since as soon as she is outside the walls her cries cease and she places on her head the long cloth (a present from her husband) from which she can make herself three loincloths and in very lively fashion follows the women and girls who are carrying her trousseau. The band of young men, with drums, trumpets, and guns, hurries after her, and there are songs of joy and hand clappings, and from time to time the long-drawn-out cry, "kouyo, kouyo," uttered by an old woman, tears the peace and silence of the night. /208/

585 789 778 And while the bride, in short steps, continues her triumphal march, a strange scene takes place in the village where she is going. The chief boli of the village has left its putrid hiding place, and while women, children, and the uninitiated, huddled in their huts, tremble at each roar given forth by its herald, it runs about the alleys in the hands of its initiates (1). This is not all; it goes into the husband's

1. Ou tara djira à tjéma k'a d'a ma: "They have gone to show her to her husband in order to give her to him." The real expression is as follows: A wéléla k'a se-n-don, A se-n-donna; "Her husband has summoned her in order to sleep with her. She has slept with her husband." The answer is: Fourou kera: "They got married."

court and enters the hut of the bride. At that instant the boli déou, sons of the boli, sing the sacred hymn and abandon themselves to their dances, and the god itself lies on the white cloth spread on the bed, on the mat where the poor girl soon will rest. Like every rite of this kind, this ceremony is called kéné salo, "to exorcise the place (2)," and its purpose is to drive out the harmful spirits who

> 2. Kéné, "surface," "plane," "floor," "court"; salo, "stroke gently with the hand"; this term denotes a movement of the hands that the sorcerers use when they are treating an invalid, "to make /ritual/ gestures."

might have evil intentions against the woman and her husband. For the husband it is also a means of publicly bearing witness to his faith in the boli and his love and his attachment for it, in short, a means of obtaining its favor and attaining a happy and fertile marriage.

The young woman and her retinue continue to walk very slowly along the winding paths, and in the distance, here and there, a gunshot, a clapping of hands, and the famous cry of "kouyo kouyo" can be heard; the cry comes near and again draws away, depending on the bends of the path, only to draw near again with a stronger burst. Finally they arrive at the edge of the fields, 200 to 300 meters at most from the village. The young men run to place themselves at the head of the procession, the bearers of the trousseau pass to the rear, the drums roll, and the horns of the band roar loudly, for this is the dance. But what a dance! The women, bent double, move their torsos back and forth in a manner which might best be compared with that of a worm that draws back and slowly stretches out; they glide over the ground without lifting /209/ their feet, leaving on the sand behind them a long trail as if a boa had passed by. With discouraging slowness, they go like this to the gate of the village, taking an hour, and often two, to cover these few hundred meters.

Covered with sweat and white with dust, the procession moves along the walls; here it is at the gate, firing guns, clapping hands,